

WHAT CONGRESS AND GANDHI HAVE DONE TO THE UNTOUCHABLES

CHAPTER VII A FALSE CHARGE

Are Untouchables the Tools of the British?

As I have said before, the Congress since the time it came under the auspices of Mr. Gandhi underwent a complete transformation. One of these transformations is noteworthy, for it is this which has made the Congress so famous and which has enabled it to capture the imagination of the people. Before Mr. Gandhi's time it did nothing more than meet annually at different places in India and pass certain and sometimes the same resolutions touching some flaw in the British Administration of India. After Mr. Gandhi took charge of the Congress in 1919, it became a party of action, or, as Congressmen like to put it, the congress forged sanctions—a thing never thought of before. The sanctions, which make up the Congress armoury and which it has put into action one time or another are: (1) Non-co-operation; (2) Boycott; (3) Civil Disobedience and (4) Fast. The aim of non-co-operation was to make government useless by refusal to recognise or resort to Government schools, colleges, courts and to make it impossible by refusing to engage in Government service. Boycott was a weapon, the aim of which was to coerce individuals not prepared to follow the dictates of the Congress. It had two edges, social or economic. The social edge cut off all social intercourse even withdrawing the services of barbers, washermen, butchers, grocers, merchants, etc., in short, making life of the culprit impossible in every way. The economic edge cut off all business relations, such as buying and selling of goods. Its objective was the merchant class selling foreign goods. Civil Disobedience was intended to give a direct blow aimed at the British Government. It was a deliberate breach of law with a view to court imprisonment, fill gaols and thereby discredit Government. It is practised either as mass civil disobedience or individual civil disobedience. Unfortunately fasting on a mass scale has not been resorted to by Congressmen. Fasting has only been an individual activity. Unfortunately fasting unto death has also not been practised by Congressmen. It has always been for a term. It is a weapon particularly reserved by Mr. Gandhi for himself. Even he uses it for a term. These are the four weapons which the Congress forged to give sanction to its demand for India's freedom.

Having forged the sanctions, the Congress has gone on to give

demonstrations of the use of these sanctions. Between 1920 and 1942, the country has witnessed demonstrations staged by Congressmen of one form or the other of these sanctions. The din and dust they raised filled the air and drew crowds to witness them. They have come to be described as "Fight for Freedom." What has been the use of such sanctions is a subject which demands serious consideration. But this is not the place for it. One must remain content with the observation that the old Congress could not have done worse. The use of sanctions has really been a tragedy, Swaraj is as far as it has been, but the reckless use of sanctions has made partition of India starker, surer and nearer. While it is not possible to discuss the gains resulting from the use of sanctions, the fact must be mentioned that this "Fight for Freedom" has been carried on mostly by the Hindus. It is only once that the Musalmans took part in it and that was during the shortlived Khilafat agitation. They soon got out of it. The other communities, particularly the Untouchables, never took part in it. A few stray individuals may have joined it for personal gain. But the community as such has stood out. This was particularly noticeable in the last campaign of the "Fight for Freedom," which followed the 'Quit India' resolution passed by the Congress in August 1942.

This is a glaring fact especially to a foreigner who comes to India and witnesses how more than half the population non-co-operates with the Congress in this "Fight for Freedom." Quite naturally he feels stupefied by this strange phenomenon. He asks: Why are the Muslims, Christians and Untouchables not participating in the "Fight for Freedom?" and turns to the Congress for an explanation. The Congress has a ready-made answer. It is that the Untouchables are the tools of British Imperialism and that is why they do not join the "Fight for Freedom." The echo of this charge was heard from the mouth of many foreigners whom one came across during the war. What is most disconcerting is the experience that most of these foreigners seemed to have accepted the allegation as being true. The simplicity and plausibility of the argument could be the only reason which can account for such an easy conversion. It serves a double purpose. It enables the Congress to account for a strange phenomenon and it gives an explanation to which circumstances lend an apparent plausibility.

Had it not been for the fact that even influential foreigners have been infected by this idea, one would hardly bestir himself to take notice of such malicious propaganda. For the explanation given by the Congress for the non-participation by the Untouchables in what is called "the Fight for Freedom" is an absurd explanation. It is an explanation which only a knave can venture to offer and which none but a fool can be expected to accept as satisfactory. But as it is almost certain that in the events that are coming, what

foreigners think about India's problems will be a matter of some moment, I think it necessary to explain the correct situation and allow no room for such erroneous notions about the Untouchables to take roots in their mind especially when there can be no difficulty in proving that it is a false charge against the Untouchables and to prove that if the Untouchables have not joined the "Fight for Freedom" it is not because they are the tools of the British Imperialism but because they fear that freedom of India, will establish Hindu domination which is sure to close to them and for ever all prospect of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness and that they will be made the hewers of wood and drawers of water.

That the Untouchables should have refused to join the Congress in the "Fight for Freedom" is in, itself a proof positive that their reason for non-cooperation with the Congress cannot be the puerile one suggested by the Congress. It must be something real and substantial. What is it ? The reason which has led the Untouchables to non-co-operate with the Congress has been popularly expressed by them when they say that they do not wish to be placed under Hindu Raj in which the governing class would be the Bania and the Brahma-1 mm with low class Hindus as their policemen, all of whom have been the hereditary enemies of the Untouchables. This language is held to offend against good taste. That may be so. But it must not be supposed that because such slogans are offensive in their tone they are devoid of sense or that the outlook which they typify and the ideals which they embody have no compelling force or that they cannot be made to wear the garb of a true and respectable political philosophy.

Translated in the language of political science, what do these slogans mean ? They mean that the Untouchables are not opposed to freedom from British Imperialism. But they refuse to be content with mere freedom from British Imperialism. What they insist upon is that free India is not enough. Free India should be made safe for democracy. Starting with this aim, they say that on account of the peculiar social formation in India there are minority communities pitted against a Hindu Communal Majority, that if no provisions are made in the constitution to cut the fangs of the Hindu. Communal Majority, India will not be safe for democracy. The Untouchables therefore insist on devising a constitution which will take note of the special circumstances of India and contain safeguards which will prevent this Hindu Communal Majority in Indian society from getting possession of political power to suppress and oppress the Untouchables and which will directly invest the Untouchables with at least a modicum of political power to prevent their suppression and exploitation, and to enable them at least to hold their own, in their struggle for existence against the Communal Majority. In short,

what the Untouchables want are safeguards in the constitution itself which will prevent the tyranny of a Hindu Communal Majority from coming into being.

The Congress on the other hand regards the freedom of India from British Imperialism to be the be-all and end-all of Indian nationalism. Nothing more, it thinks, is necessary for the welfare of the Indian people in a free India. As to the question of a constitution for a free India, the Congress simply does not look upon it as a problem. Asked, what about the constitution of a free India? The Congress reply is that it will be a democracy. What sort of democracy would it be? The Congress answer is that it will be based on adult franchise. Will there be any other safeguard, besides adult suffrage for preventing the tyranny of a Hindu Communal Majority? The Congress reply is emphatically in the negative. Asked, why this opposition to safeguards? the Congress says that it is a vivisection of the nation,—an argument the pictures queerness of which is intended to cover its stupidity and which has its origin in the genius of Mr. Gandhi, and for which the high class Hindus, who stand to lose by these safeguards, feel so grateful to him.

The Untouchables refuse to accept this silly sophism. They say that Indian social life has to be reckoned in terms of communities. There is no escape. Communities are such hard facts of Indian social life that it would be wrong to accept that communal impulse and communal prejudice do not dominate the relations of the communities. The social psychology of the Hindu Communal Majority is dominated by the dogma which recognises not merely inequality but graded inequality as the rule governing the inter-relationship among the various communities. This dogma of graded inequality is absolutely inimical to liberty and fraternity. It cannot be believed that this graded inequality will vanish or that the Hindus will strive to abolish it. That is impossible. This graded inequality is not accidental or incidental. It is the religion of the Hindus. It is the official doctrine of Hinduism. It is sacred and no Hindu can think of doing away with 'it. The Hindu Communal Majority with its religion of graded inequality is not therefore a passing phase. It is a permanent fact and a menace for ever. In making a constitution for India the existence of a standing Communal Majority cannot be ignored and the problem of devising safeguards so as to reconcile it with political democracy must be faced. That is the reasoning of the Untouchables.

The constitutional safeguards which the Untouchables have been demanding are detailed in the Resolutions recently passed by the Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation and which are printed in Appendix XI. For purposes of argument I take three of them. (i) Guaranteed minimum representation in the Legislature; (ii) Guaranteed minimum representation in the Executive and (iii) Guaranteed minimum

representation in the Public Services. These demands are ridiculed by the Congress as communalism and the leaders of the Untouchables are represented as job hunters. The Congress places its opposition to these guarantees on the high pedestal of nationalism, of which it holds itself as the guardian angel. The foreigner may find it difficult to see the absurdity of the Congress argument against safeguards. But if he were to take into account the purposes for which these guarantees are sought, he will find that the attempt of the Congress to represent them as a piece of communalism is arrant nonsense.

The purpose of these guarantees demanded by the Untouchables is not to fill the Legislature, the Executive and the Administration by the representatives of the Untouchables. These guarantees are really floorings below which the Untouchables will not fall under the crushing pressure of the Hindu Communal Majority. They are intended to keep the Hindu Communal Majority within bounds. For, if there were no such guarantees to the Untouchables, the result will be that the Hindu Communal Majority will not only capture the Legislature, the Executive and the Administration, but the Legislature, the Executive and the Administration will be over-run by the Hindu Communal Majority and these powerful organs of the State, instead of protecting the minorities, will become the tools of the Hindu Communal Majority doing its biddings.

In the light of this explanation there ought to be no difficulty for any outsider of average intelligence in understanding the issues between the Congress and the Untouchables. In the first place, he ought to be able to realize that the issue between them is created by the former refusing to recognise that in the existence of a Communal Majority there lies a great menace to political democracy and the latter maintaining the contrary and insisting that the constitution should contain positive provisions to curb this menace. In other words, the Untouchables are anxious to make India safe for democracy, while the Congress, if it is not opposed to democracy, is certainly opposed to creating conditions which will make democracy real.

In the second place, the foreigner should be able to see that this demand by the Untouchables for safeguards is not a novel demand. His understanding will be facilitated if he were to regard these safeguards as another name for checks and balances and to bear in mind that there is no constitution which does not contain such checks and balances to protect political democracy from being subverted and to note how the constitution of the U.S.A. is full of such checks and balances which are embodied in clauses relating to Fundamental Rights and Separation of Powers. If he does this, he need not feel puzzled if the safeguards demanded by the Untouchables take a different

form than they do in other countries. For, the nature of safeguards must differ with the nature of the forces which constitute a menace to political democracy and as these forces in India are of a different character, the safeguards must necessarily take a different form.

In the third place, the foreigner should have no difficulty in realizing that if anybody is communal it is the Congress and not the Untouchables, and that whatever the philosophic grounds advanced by the Congress the real motive of the Congress in opposing the demand for constitutional guarantees is to keep the political field a free pasture for the Hindu Majority. He should be able to see, though the Congress does not openly say so, how natural it is for the Congress to be communal. The Hindu Communal Majority is the back-bone of the Congress. It is made up of the Hindus and is fed by the Hindus. It is this Majority which constitutes the clientele of the Congress and the Congress, therefore, is bound to protect the rights of its clients. If he realizes this, he will not be deceived by the arguments of the Congress that it is opposing these demands in the name of nationalism. On the other hand, he will realize that the Congress is deceiving the world by using nationalism as a cloak for a free field for rank communalism.

Lastly, he will know why the representative character of the Congress has become an issue of such importance in Indian politics. He will realize that nobody would have cared to bother about the representative character of the Congress and to inquire, whom it represents and whom it does not, if the Congress were not to arrogate to itself the right to say what should be the constitution of a free India. But as it does, its right to speak in the name of the country forms a vital issue and those who do not accept this have no alternative but to challenge it.

II

With all this, foreigners have said—"Why not join the Congress in the ' Fight for Freedom ' ? ; why make agreement on constitutional safeguards a condition precedent to cooperation with the Congress ? After all, safeguards can come only after freedom is won." A foreigner who has followed the foregoing discussion as to matters which divide the Congress can be left to understand why the Untouchables have not thought it safe to co-operate with the Congress in this "Fight for Freedom." But there may be some who may not be able to imagine them and who would like to know what they are. Rather than leave them to find wrong reasons it is better to take the trouble to let them have the right ones. The reasons are various. Only the most important are set out below.

The first reason is founded in common-sense. The Untouchables say:

"What harm is there in demanding from the Congress an agreement in advance ? What is lost, if a guarantee is given by the Congress in advance ? " They argue that if- the Congress agreed to this demand for safeguards in advance it will have a double effect. In the first place, it will give an assurance to the Untouchables who entertain so much dread as to what their lot would be under a Hindu Communal Majority. Secondly, such an assurance would go a long way in inducing the Untouchables to co-operate with the Congress. After all, why are the Untouchables non-co-operating ? Because, they are afraid that if this freedom is achieved it will enable the Hindu Majority once again to enslave them. Why not remove this fear if it can be done at so small a cost, namely, by an agreement in advance ?

The second reason is founded in experience. The Untouchables say that the experience of the world does not justify the hope that when the "Fight for Freedom" ends, the stronger elements have shown the generosity to give security to the weaker elements.

Many examples of this betrayal could be cited. The most notorious one relates to the betrayal of the Negroes in the United States after the Civil War. Speaking of the part played by the Negroes in the Civil War Mr. Herbert Apthekar says :

"One hundred and twenty-five thousand Negroes from the slave states served in the Federal armies. They, together with the eighty thousand from the North, fought in four hundred and fifty battles, with an inspiring and inspired courage that was of the utmost importance in bringing about the collapse of the Confederacy and the abolition of slavery.

"Here were over two hundred thousand armed Negro men fighting within a state built upon and dedicated to the pro-position that the Negro was, if at all a human being an innately and in eradicably inferior one, fit only to be a slave.

"And the Negro soldiers of the Republic fought notwithstanding shameful discriminations and disadvantages. White soldiers received thirteen dollars a month. Negroes received but seven dollars (until July 14, 1864, when the pay was equalized, retroactively to January 1, 1864) ; there were enlistment bounties for white recruits, none for Negroes (until June 15, 1864) ; and there was no possibility for advancement into the ranks of commissioned officers for Negroes.. . . The Confederacy never recognised captured Negro soldiers who had been slaves as prisoners of war, and did not accord this status to captured free Negroes until October 1864. The Negroes were either killed, returned to slavery, or confined at hard labour.

"Here were these scores of thousands of hitherto enslaved and oppressed masses, armed, and sent forth into their own country, whose every creek and knoll was known to them, to maintain their newly obtained freedom, to prove their manhood and to liberate their own people, their own parents and children and wives, from a slavery that they know only too well. And let it always be remembered that in the war to save the republic thirty-seven thousand Negro soldiers were killed in action."

What happened to the Negroes after the Civil War was over ? In, the first flush of victory, the Republicans, who waged the war for saving the Union and obtained the help of the Negroes to win it, carried the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Under it the Negroes ceased to be slaves in the legal sense of the term. But did the Negroes get any right to participate in the Government as voters or officials ? The Republicans did take some action in order to make the Southern States accept that the Negroes were to be treated as the political equals of the Whites. This was done by the Fourteenth Amendment which conferred citizenship, State as well as Federal, on all persons including the Negroes born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, forbade legislation by a State abridging the privileges or immunities of a citizen of the United States, and provided for reducing the representation, in the Congress of any State in. proportion to the number of its citizens excluded from the suffrage. The Southern States had no intention to respect the Fourteenth Amendment. All except Tennessee had rejected the amendment and had set up governments of the White inhabitants. The Republicans then proceeded (March 2, 1867) to pass the so-called Reconstruction Act (a bill to provide efficient governments for the insurrectionary States) designed to create legitimate governments in the States not yet readmitted to the Union (ignoring the governments set up by the White inhabitants), and to determine the conditions proper for their readmission. By this Act these States, that is the whole seceding South except Tennessee, were divided into five military districts, each to be governed by a Brigadier-General of the Federal Army, until such time as (1)a State convention had framed a new constitution, (2) the Fourteenth Amendment had been ratified and (3) the States had been duly readmitted. The Republicans carried another amendment called the Fifteenth Amendment, forbidding the voting right of citizen to be denied or abridged on account of race, colour or previous condition of servitude which also became by similar acceptance part of the Constitution and binding on, all the States.

The Whites in the South had no intention to admit the Negroes to equal citizenship. Disfranchisement of the Negro proceeded apace. It was undertaken as a solemn duty both by the State Governments of the .South as

well as by the Whites of the Southern States. To evade the Fifteenth Amendment the State Governments spent their ingenuity in framing franchise laws which denied the Negroes the right to vote on grounds other than race or colour. Most of them decided upon the grandfather clause which effectively excluded the Negroes but fully included the Whites. On the people's side the process was carried out by the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan was in its origin a secret combination formed in Tennessee by youths for purposes of amusement. It was transferred into an organisation to suppress the Negroes and prevent them from exercising their political rights. It started committing outrages upon Negroes, and (less frequently) upon Whites supposed to be in sympathy with the Negroes, in the rural South. These gang-men were never discovered. This shows that the whole of the White population of the South supported the Klan men. No open resistance to the Federal troops was attempted; but neither their activity nor the penal laws passed by the Congress were effective in checking the flogging, house-burnings, and murders which during these years disgraced some districts.

The purposes of the Southern States and the Southern Whites were facilitated by the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States. The Supreme Court held that the State laws disfranchising the Negroes were valid notwithstanding the Fifteenth Amendment because the disfranchisement was not based on race and colour. Similarly the Supreme Court held that if the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, prevented the Negro from exercising his electoral rights there was no redress: for, the Fifteenth Amendment, while it prevented the States from interfering with the electoral rights, did not prevent interference by private bodies.

What did the Republicans do ? Instead of amending the Constitution to give better and more effective guarantees to the Negroes, they agreed to recognise the Southern States and admit them to the Union, to grant general amnesty to the rebels and to withdraw the troops stationed therein leaving the Negroes to the tender mercy of their masters. As Mr. Apthekar says :

"But the heroic fight of the Negro people and their allies for democracy, land and civil rights in the South was defeated chiefly as a result of shameful betrayal, by the industrial and financial bourgeoisie of the North. In 1877, the latter came to an understanding with the reactionary plantocracy of the South. Working through the reactionary wing of the Republican Party, the Northern Lig bourgeoisie sold out the Revolution by giving the old slave oligarchy a free hand (home rule) in the Southern States. This 'gentleman's agreement' meant disenfranchisement for the Negro, sharecropping peonage, lynch terrorism, and the loss of civil liberties and educational opportunities."

The story of the betrayal is not complete. It is necessary to add that if the Republicans were to carry their party opposition with the Democrats into the South, the Negro could still be saved from damnation. For it is the opinion, of those who know that if the Whites of the South were divided into Republicans and Democrats as they are in, the North there is hardly a State in the South which would not be largely controlled by the Negro voters. Even the Republicans will not do. The Republicans seem to have entered into a compact with the Democrats not to canvass for the votes of the Negroes. Indeed, the Republican Party in the South does not exist. It does not exist because it is afraid of having to take sides with the Negroes. The Untouchables cannot forget the fate of the Negroes. It is to prevent such treachery that the Untouchables have taken the attitude they have with regard to this 'Fight "for" "Freedom." What is wrong in this ? Are they doing anything more than, follow the advice of Burke, who has said that it is better to be accused of timidity than to be ruined by over-confident security.

The third argument is that there is no justification for the Congress to say that the "Fight for Freedom" must come first and the agreement about constitutional safeguards afterwards. The Untouchables feel that having regard to the attitude of the British Government to India's right to freedom, this fight, which the Congress loves so much, is uncalled for, at any rate, it is putting the cart before the horse. The attitude of the British towards India's claim for freedom has since the Mutiny of 1857 undergone a complete change. There was a time when the British Government held the view which was a complete negation of India's claim for freedom. It was proclaimed by Lawrence whose statue in Calcutta has the motto : " The British conquered India by the sword and they will hold it by sword." This attitude is dead and buried and it is no exaggeration to say that every Englishman today is ashamed of it. This stage was followed by another in which the argument of the British Government against India's freedom was the alleged incapacity of Indians for Parliamentary institutions. It began with Lord Ripon's regime which was followed by an attempt to give political training to Indians, first in the field of Local Self-Government, and then under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms in the field of Provincial Government. We have now entered the third or the present stage. British Government is now ashamed to say that they will hold India by the sword. It no longer says that Indians have no capacity to run Parliamentary institutions. The British Government admits India's right to freedom, even to independence, if Indians so desire. The British Government admits the right of Indians to frame their own constitution. There can be no greater proof of this new angle of vision than the Cripps Proposals. The condition precedent laid down by the British Government for India's freedom

is that Indians must produce a constitution which has the concurrence of the important elements in the national life of the country. Such is the stage we have reached. The Untouchables cannot therefore understand why the Congress, instead of trying to achieve agreement among Indians, should keep on talking in terms of a "Fight for Freedom" and maligning the Untouchables in not joining in it,

III

Why does the Congress oppose the proposal of the British Government? It seeks to justify its opposition on two grounds. It says that the condition prescribed by the British Government puts a veto on freedom of India in the hands of the Untouchables. This is a stupid argument and for two reasons. In the first place, the Untouchables in India have never made impossible demands. They have not even made unreasonable demands. They do not say as Carson did to Redmond: "Damn your safeguards. We don't wish to be ruled by you." The Untouchables are quite prepared to submit themselves to the rule of the Hindu Majority, notwithstanding the unsocial and the undemocratic character of its ethics, provided the constitution gives them reasonable safeguards. To say, that the Untouchables will exercise a veto on India's freedom by raising impossible demands is thus a gross libel, for which there is not the slightest justification. Assuming the fear is well-founded, the Congress is not altogether without a remedy. For it is still open to the Congress to say that if there is no agreement between the Hindus and the Untouchables the dispute should be referred to an International Board of Arbitration. If the Congress took this stand, I am sure, neither the British Government nor the Untouchables will have the slightest objection to it. But when, instead of making an honest and sincere attempt to bring about an agreed constitution, the Congress goes on launching its campaigns for achieving freedom—not without occasional rests and retreats—the only conclusion, which the Untouchables can draw, is that the Congress wants to coerce the British Government to transfer its power or to use Mr. Gandhi's phrase, "hand over the keys to the Congress," without being obliged to agree to the safeguards demanded by the Untouchables. In short, what the Congress wants is a free India with full, unrestricted freedom to the Hindus in a free India to dispose of the Untouchables in any way they liked. No wonder the Untouchables have refused to take part in such a dishonest agitation, elevated though it may be by such high sounding name as "Fight for Freedom"!

The other ground urged by the Congress for not taking up the question of bringing about an agreement is that the British Government is not honest, and that notwithstanding its declarations it will not transfer power even if Indians

agreed upon a constitution, and that ultimately Indians will have to struggle with the British in order to wrest power from their hands. The reply of the Untouchables is that they see no reason why Indians should start, with such complete distrust of the British intentions. After all, the British Government has moved in the direction of fulfilling Indian aspirations and is moving. If it is slow in moving it is due to Indians being content with small things. Right from the conquest of India by the British upto 1886, Indians never cared who ruled them nor how they were ruled. They were content to live without troubling themselves about these questions. In 1886 the Congress was organised and for the first time Indians began to take interest in the government of India.. But even the Congress upto 1910 was content in agitating for good Government only. It was in 1910 that the Congress first demanded Self-Government. When in 1919 the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were on the anvil, Indians had an occasion to state the scope of their demand for Self-Government. What is known as the Memorandum of the Nineteen defined the aspirations of the Indians as they stood in 1917. Any one who knows it will remember that the best and the most radical Indians were content only with Dyarchy in the Provinces. Even this was regarded as a big jump by some Indian leaders such as Sir Dinshaw Wacha and Mr. Samarath In 1930 notwithstanding the Congress Resolution insisting on Independence, Mr. Gandhi at the R. T. C. was prepared to be content with Provincial autonomy. The British granted more than that. If from 1939 there has been a halt, it is mainly because Indians are not agreed on the sort of constitution they want for their country.

The Untouchables think that the stage, when the British were sitting upon the freedom of India, as the snake in the fable is said to sit on a treasure, not allowing anyone to come near it, is gone long past. India's Freedom is like property held by a Receiver. The British Government has placed itself in the position of a Receiver. As soon as the dispute is over and the right kind of constitution is settled, it has bound itself to hand over the property to its rightful owners, namely, Indians. The Untouchables ask: why not take advantage of this ? why not adopt the straight and honest course of arriving at an agreement among the important elements in the country and then make a joint application for the release of the property ? That the Congress does not want to follow this line of action shows, say the Untouchables, that the Congress "Fight for Freedom" is nothing more than mere tactics, the object of which is to by-pass the necessity of an agreed constitution demanded by the Untouchables and made a condition precedent by the British Government for the grant of freedom.

The Untouchables do not say that they are out to underwrite the declarations made by the British Government, they do not say that if Indians

are agreed it must necessarily be a case of "knock and it will open : ask and it shall be given unto you." They admit that the British may not act up to the declarations they have made. It may be that even when an agreed constitution is produced, they may not act up to their promises, and a fight for freedom may become necessary. The Untouchables do not overlook these possibilities. But what they do say is that the Indians have not put the British to the test. They can't be put to test unless they are presented with an agreed constitution. So long as the Congress does not adopt this course as the first—though it may not be last —line of action, the Untouchables feel that the Congress is not honest in its dealings with them, not even to the country. Who can say that the Untouchables have not sufficient justification for refusing to participate in the Congress " Fight for Freedom" ?

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